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THE CRITICAL LIST

My Back Wages

1. Carmel: *The Drum Is Everything* (London import). Well, not quite *everything* — there's the double bass, the occasional guest Hammond, the horns and, of course, the steamy blond chanteuse from whom the project takes its name. Minimalist beatnik soul, cool heat, like a cross between Weekend and ESG. Dug. Dig?

2. *Bill Monroe and Friends* (MCA). Low-key, all-star party with the Big Daddy of bluegrass mandolin. Guests include Willie, Johnny, Emmylou, Babs Mandrell and every last Oak Ridge Boy. Each cut preceded by an approximation of this exchange: Bill: "So glad to have you." Guest: "This is the greatest honor of my life." Bill: "Thank you." Good stuff.

3. Jon Wayne, live at the Club Lingerie, 3/27. Whiskey. Texas. Whiskey. Funeral. Texas. Godammit.

4. Michael Jackson: *Thiller* (Epic). Haven't played this record since it became What It Is (and What It Shall Be). Haven't had to, if you get my drift. Last night: Thai restaurant: all of side one. Know what I'm saying? Omnipresent.

5. Laurie Anderson: side one of *You're the Guy I Want to Share My Money With* (Giorno Poetry Systems). Portrait of the pop star as a young artist.

6. Led Zeppelin: *Led Zeppelin III* (Atlantic). You can still buy it with the little wheel that spins around in the cover. And inside? Weirdest blues this side of Don Van Vliet.

7. Irwin Applebaum: *The World According to Beaver: The Official* Leave It to Beaver *Book* (Bantam). The history. The philosophy. The trials. The tears. The laughs. The lumps. The town. The food. The synopses. The glossary. And a mess of other neat junk 'n' stuff no home should be without.

8. The sound of a Gibson L 5S run through a Superscope portable tape deck, *all the way up*. Soothingly apocalyptic.

—Robert Lloyd

Montezuma's Revenge

1. The Smiths: "Reel Around the Fountain," from *The Smiths* (Sire). This latent slice of homo-erotic pop splendor has got to be the purtiest thing so far this year. Lucious music is not a disease.

2. March Violets: "Snake Dance" (Rebirth International import EP). This has been out for awhile, and it's even being played on KROQ, but it's still real groovy. One person said it reminded him of AC/DC while others claim they hear a trace of vintage Jefferson Airplane in the three co-ed vocalists. What the hey, it's got a good beat and my friends like it and there's a real guitar on it. Give it a 90+.

3. The wacko girl that was writhing on the floor in front of Pell Mell, who were playing spacy yet tight instrumentals to live by two weeks ago at the O.N. Klub.

4. Scritti Politti: "Wood Beez (Pray Like Aretha Franklin)" (Virgin Records import 12 inch). God help us, it's disco, it will be discovered and released here, it will be a huge hit and I'll probably grow to hate it, but I can't listen to snarling, brain-diseased metal mutant noise all the time, and this is a wonderfully infectious example of white boy R&B role/game playing. The vocals sound sped up, but the soul heart beats faster.

5. Meat Puppets: "Plateau," from *Meat Puppets II* (SST). Hearing this gently warped, kinda country-acid tune head suddenly into a guitar break that is truly the sound of cosmic consciousness justifies justifying weird groups that are more than weird groups. Brilliant.

6. Prefab Sprout: "Swoon" (Kitchenware Records import). Hey, I like the Eurythmics and Richard Meltzer thinks they're the same BM as Fleetwood Mac, and none of that has anything to do with Prefab Sprout, but I like them too and someone said the singer sounds like Anthony Newley. No way; early Bowie sounded like Anthony Newley, but this is James Joyce pop that paints itself into musical corners and then breaks through with impossible pop hooks. Applicable adjectives: pretty, folksy, jazzy, convoluted. Not really for casual listening, could be irritating in that it commands some sort of commitment. Ranks with The Smiths as important pop statement, friend.

7. Robert Gorl: "Night Full of Tension" (Mute Records import). Been a fan of this guy since the days he played with D.A.F., making perfect synth-pop in the Teutonic mold — minimal, insistent, sexy and mysterious stuff. Gets a bit poppier on this album, with guest vocalist Annie Lennox adding her kook-a-cool coo. This is music that belongs in elevators and dentists' offices, and that's not a put-down either, it's a veiled comment on art as life, but gee haw, who wants to get into it?

—Craig Lee

Ten Great Items For Which To Move Your Feet

1. Melvis and the Megatones, judging from recent live performance, have a great handle on Roy Brown, Louis Jordan and other R&B classics, both in the instrumentation and in Mel's great set of pipes.

2. Streetlife: "Act on Instinct" (Factory import). Heavy dance groove with heavy rap, and good advice.

3. Paul Young: "Wherever I Lay My Hat," live at Beverly Theatre, March 14. Strains of Rod Stewart in his prime, plus he's cute as Dion (used to be). Despite the Bay City Rollers image, he's got a helluva voice, and this torch ballad nearly burned down the house.

4. "Win, Jesse, Win" (12 inch). A great rap on the only political candidate worth dancing to. Can anyone tell me what label it's on, who it's by and where to get it?

5. General Public: "General Public," (Virgin import 12 inch). Promising hint of things to come. Title track is fairly beat-oriented, while flipside instrumental has commanding, clashing guitar rhythm.

6. Special AKA: "Nelson Mandela" (Two-Tone import). Favorite of the day. Authentic-sounding South African beat with celebrity-clad chorus line singing for the freedom of the leading black civil rights activist, still jailed after 21 years. Great tune.

7. Cindy Lauper: "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" (Portrait 12 inch remix). Everyone's sick and tired of this tune by now, I know, but wait. Listen to the dub mixes here, courtesy of this year's King of the Mix, Arthur Baker. Better than anything since Human League's dub mix album, and helps fight the argument that remixes are the '80s version of the '60s extended guitar solo.

8. Dominatrix: "The Dominatrix Sleeps Tonight." (Streetwise). Great groove, great cover, funny lyrics. Dubious lasting value, dance groove of the moment.

9. Bob Dylan: "License to Kill." Live on David Letterman. The Zimm himself, with Chalo and Tony from Los Plugz and J.J. (ex-88's) backing him up.

10. Jason and the Scorchers: "Absolutely Sweet Marie" (EMI) Track from their album, covering Dylan like he should be covered. This band rocks, and I'm gonna catch them for sure when they come back to town (April 5).

—John Sutton-Smith

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